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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes that despite the anticipated benefits of classroom research for improved instruction, there are identifiable factors that can interfere with its effectiveness. Examples are drawn from three research projects, undertaken in English-as-a-Second-Language instructional settings. First, the steps in the classroom research process are outlined. Then for each case, the evolution of the project is described, problems are noted, and attempts to remedy them are examined. The cases involved professional development projects for secondary and postsecondary language teachers. It is concluded that in each instance, some of these things happened to prevent change: (1) teachers were not given recognition or time off for doing research; (2) the agenda was controlled by the administration; (3) the agenda was subverted from within by teachers who wanted to bolster their own position within the political context in which they worked; (4) teachers lacked the technical skill and knowledge to conceptualize and operationalize their research interests; and (5) doing research got in the way of teaching; (6) there was a secondary agenda concerning curriculum development; and (7) teachers feared that involvement in classroom research would be used against them. A series of recommendations is made for maximizing chances of success. (MSE)

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The more things change the more they stay the same: Or why action research doesn't work

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The more things change the more they stay the same: Or why action research doesn't work
Plenary presentation, ILEC '94, Hong Kong

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"Can the quest for objectivity distract us from the search for truth?"
(Walker 1982: 57)

INTRODUCTION:
In this paper, I shall explore some of the problematic aspects of attempting to bring about change in language classrooms through action research. Data for the study will take the form of case studies of action research projects carried out in a variety of EFL and ESL settings. Each of these projects encountered serious problems which jeopardised their very existence. In each instance, I shall outline the evolution of the project, set out what went wrong, and describe what was done in an attempt to remedy the problems. The presentation will conclude with a set of operating principles for bringing about change in the classroom through the development of an action research agenda.

WHAT IS ACTION RESEARCH?
Action research involves systematically changing some aspect of one's professional practice, usually in response to some issue, problem or puzzle, collecting relevant data on the effects of the changed practice, and the interpretation and analysis of that data. In educational contexts, these procedures as meant to improve the quality of learning, and to enhance the rationality and justice of the educational system (Kemmis and Carr, 1986).

Numerous reason have been advanced for the use of action research in professional development. Wallace, for example, argues that (1991:56-7), action research can be attractive for two particular reasons:
1. It can have a specific and immediate outcome which can be directly related to practice in the teacher's own context.
2. The 'findings' of such research might be primarily specific, i.e. it is not claimed that they are necessarily of general application, and therefore the methods might be more free-ranging than those of conventional research. .... 'Research' of this kind is simply an extension of the normal reflective practice by many teachers, but it is slightly more rigorous and might conceivably lead to more effective outcomes." Those of us who work in teacher education know that one of the most difficult things to balance in a course is the tension between theoretical and practical aspects of the profession.

van Lier, (1992: 3) also argues persuasively for the use of action research as a way to bridge the gap between theory and practice, stating that:
... theory and practice are not perceived as integral parts of a teacher's practical professional life. ... This situation is the result of communication gaps caused by an increasingly opaque research technocracy, restrictive practices in educational institutions and bureaucracies (e.g. not validating research time, or not granting sabbaticals to teachers for professional renovation), and overburdening teachers who cannot conceive of ways of theorizing and researching that come out of daily work and facilitate that daily work. (van Lier 1992: 3)
Finally, Allwright and Bailey, (1991), had pointed to the value of classroom observation, reflective teaching and action research
Slowly, the profession as a whole is realising that, no matter how much intellectual energy is put into the invention of new methods (or of new approaches to syllabus design, and so on), what really matters is what happens when teachers and learners get together in the classroom. .... This shift in emphasis from concentrating on planning decisions ... to concentrating on looking at what actually happens in the classroom, has led researchers to have much greater respect for classroom teaching. The more we look, the more we find, and the more we realise how complex the teacher's job is. And teachers, in their turn, faced at last with researchers who have at least some idea of the enormous complexity of everyday classroom life, are beginning to be more receptive to the whole research enterprise. ... Being a good classroom teacher means being alive to what goes on in the classroom, alive to the problems of sorting out what matters, moment by moment, from what does not. And that is what classroom research is all about: gaining a better

understanding of what good teachers (and learners) do instinctively as a matter of course, so that ultimately all can benefit. (Allwright and Bailey, 1991).

Action research typically evolves through a series of cycles begining with the identification of a puzzle or problem, some sort of preliminary investigation, to obtain baseline data on the issue in question, the formulation of an intervention strategy, activation of the strategy and documentation of the results, reporting on the outcome, and planning the next cycle in the process. These steps are illustrated in Table 1 and 2, below. Table 1 summarises a study taken from a second language context, and Table 2, a study from a foreign language context.

STEPS IN THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

Table 1: The Action Research Cycle: An ESL Example

1	Problem/puzzle Identification	--->	A teacher identifies a problem/puzzle. "My students don't seem interested or motivated."
2	Preliminary Investigation	--->	What's going on? Recording and observing class over several days.
3	Hypothesis	--->	Content doesn't seem to stimulate students. Exclusive use of display questions.
4	Plan intervention	--->	Increase use of referential questions. Make links between content and learners.
5	Outcome	--->	More complex interactions. More involvement and interest. More 'natural' discourse, e.g. students nominate topics, Ss disagree with teacher, S-S interaction
6	Reporting	--->	Staff development session

Table 2: The Action Research Cycle: A Foreign Language Example

1	Problem Identification	--->	A teacher identifies a problem in her classroom. "My students aren't using the target language
2	Preliminary Investigation	--->	What's going on? Recording and observing class over several days.
3	Hypothesis	--->	Teacher uses too much English. The important stuff is done in English
4	Plan intervention	--->	Teacher increases target language use. Teacher uses German for classroom management etc.
5	Outcome	--->	Increase in use of German by students.
6	Reporting	--->	Article in teachers' newsletter.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1; Phil the Enthusiast

The Context:
In the 1980s, I was approached by the coordinator of a programme for providing professional support to foreign language teachers in Australia. The coordinator, let's call him Phil, had heard me give a talk on ways of empowering classroom teachers by handing power and responsibility

back to them for critical aspects of their work such curriculum planning and development through school based curriculum developed, and professional development, through classroom observation and action research. Phil wanted to know whether I was interested in working with him to plan, implement and evaluate a programme of professional development and renewal for a group of secondary school teachers of a wide range of foreign languages, including Indonesian, French, German, Chinese, Italian and Vietnamese. Excited at the prospect of systematically implementing my ideas with a different group of teachers from the ones for whom the ideas had originally been developed, I agreed on two conditions: firstly, that the project be over a reasonable span of time, that is two to three years, and secondly, that the Ministry of Education should provide the teachers taking part in the project with eight full days of paid release time during the course of the project. The first condition was readily agreed to. The second involved considerable negotiation. The final compromise was the the Ministry would pay for eight haf-days, on condition that teachers contributed some of their own time. A classic case of Indian Giving, but it did result in the project getting under way.

The stimulus for change:
Apart from the enthusiasm of Phil, as the project coordinator, and me as the project consultant, what was the spark that had ignited what was merely a good idea at the time? The single most important stimulus for the project was the imminent appearance of a highly controversial set of currciulum guidelines for the teaching of all languages other than English in Australian schools. Called appropriately enough the ALL Guidelines, these proposals, to be properly implemented, would require a major shift in the way that many foreign language teachers conducted their daily professional lives. The project that I became involved in was designed as a consciousness-raising exercise to encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching, to collect objective data on what went on there, and to identify areas where they wanted to improve.

What happened
The project succeeded with some teachers who felt that, despite the anxiety and amount of work involved, they had developed a more reflective attitude towards their teaching, they had identified and solved some of the problems with which they were confronted in their daily lives, and they had a greater sense of control over their own professional destiny. For some of the other teachers, the result was not quite so happy. They felt that they needed support on a day-to-day basis, rather than the half-day consultations that the project provided for. Some felt devalued and alienated within their schools (although others reported that their status had been enhanced by involvement in the project). Many were unable to conceptualise and focus their investigation, and this led to feeling of frustration and even anger. Finally, and inevitably, there were those who were fearful of being observed.

Emboldened by the general success of our initial efforts, Phil and I decided on an expanded project in the second year. This time the results were not quite so happy. The Government, as a condition of funding the project, insisted that the action research projects had to be explicitly tied to the implementation of a new set of curriculum guidelines. In effect, the government was saying that they would fund the research only if it gave them answers to questions arising from their curricular innovation. They also reduced the amount of time made available to teachers outside of the classroom to obtain expert help, to collaborate with colleagues, and to report on their work. Several teachers, believing that they were to become pawns of the bureaurocracy, refused to continue their association with the project. The move also seriously

The stricture that teachers could only research an issue or area of direct interest to the funding authority violates one of the fundamental principles of action research - the freedom of the individual concerned to determine what to investigate, how to investigate, and how to report. This particular initiative underlines the importance of adhering to fundamental principles.

Case Study 2: Marion the Martyr

The context:
The second case study concerns a group of foreign language teachers working at the secondary school level. All teachers were non-native speakers of the language they were teaching. While

most had trained as teachers of European languages, typically German and French, they were in the process of changing to the teaching of newly popular Asian languages such as Jaspanese, Indonesian and Chinese.

The stimulus for change:
The stimulus for change in this case was a government mandated decree that all secondary students, and eventually all primary level students should study a second language. A dilemma was created for the educational system when students voted strongly with their feet to take Asian rather European languages. The dilemma was brought about because resources within the system were geared towards European rather than Asian foreign languages. The main problem was the paucity of teachers for Asian languages, particularly Japanese. As a result, pressure was placed on teachers to switch languages, and undergo crash courses in their chosen language as well as undergoing retraining in classroom methods and techniques.

One of the major planks in the professional development programme was the initiation of an action research project. it was felt that such a project would not only assist the teachers in redirecting skills they already posessed from the teaching of european to Asian languages, but that it would also connect with the real day-to-day problems and challenges that teachers were facing.

What happened:
The teachers were given an initial two-day, paid release period to attend a workshop designed to familiarise them with the principles of action research, and with techniques for collecting and analysing data. They were also given three half-day follow-up sessions to work with other participnts in the programme as well as consulting with senior advisers and the project consultant.

The problems began once teachers had taken part in an initial classroom observation and data collection exercise. All teachers were horrified at their level of competence in the target language, as revealed by the audio and videorecordings, and most were also depressed by the fact that their professional skills also suffered. For several the work involved in classroom observation and action research added an intolerable burden to what was already an extremely stressful period in their professional lives. Most reported that having to juggle and monitor recording equipment seriously interfered with their teaching duties, and the demands of conceptualizing their project (for example, focusing the question so that it was actually capable of being answered) compounded the anxiety and guilt that many felt at being, as one teacher put it, "only one lesson ahead of my students".

Case Study 3: Colin the Cynic

The context:
The third case study took place in a foreign language context. The language institute concerned is devoted primarily to the teaching of English as a foreign language to post-secondary school students. There is also a vocational dimension to the course of studies. In general, the students entering the institution lack motivation, and consider that they have failed the system, their parents, and themselves.

The stimulus for change:
Falling enrollments, brought about by changing demographics and also the prolonged recession of the 1990s led the school to reevaluate its place in the educational market-place, its curriculum, and its general approach to education. It decided that a major shift in focus was needed, and established a Curriculum Renewal Project to revamp the organisational structure of the institution, reconceptualise the curriculum following principles of learner-centredness and task-based learning, produce materials in house to support the curriculum, develop an assessment system consistent with the new curriculum, and implement a system of professional development.

What happened:
Overall, the project, which is ongoing, is a considerable success. This is particularly so in relation to the development of curriculum guidelines, the creation of materials, and, surprisingly, the development of an assessment system. The latter is surprising because, like all other aspects of

the curriculum, it was developed in-house, by teachers who, initially at least, had little experience in the areas of testing and assessment.

The one area where the project ran into trouble was in the area officially designated as "professional development". I say "officially" designated, because, in actual fact, a massive amount of professional development occurred as teachers became involved in activities associated with the renewal project such as developing syllabuses, assisting in the organisation of a self-access centre, writing materials, and developing assessment instruments and procedures. While there were several initiatives in the professional development area, including staff seminars, the centrepiece was intended to be a series of action research projects. It was felt that action research would have two major benefits. In the first place, it would give teachers control over their own professional development by enabling them to decide what they wanted to change in relation to their own teaching practice and how they wanted to change, and that it would also connect professional development with real issues, problems, puzzles and challenges. (All to often, formal seminar programmes, around which most professional development is organised, while interesting in their own right, often fail to provide participants with solutions to problems they are having in their classrooms).

Despite the fact that the action research initiative was enthusiastically supported by the curriculum renewal consultants and teachers were given a practical introduction to techniques for identifying and refining questions, collecting and analysing data, and writing up the project, the action research initative, after a faltering start, died completely.

Several things conspired to bring the action research initiative to a halt. In the first place, the administration decreed that no time off would be allowed for participants to carry out essential tasks such as transcribing data, consulting with colleagues, and writing up their results. Secondly, the teacher who was to coordinate the initiative worked to undermine it (for reasons which could be spelt out here, but will not be!). In addition, the insensitivity of the project coordinator, who adopted a "we have ways of making you do action research" attitude, deterred a number of teachers. (In fairness to the coordinator, it must be said that the idea of creating an action research dimension to the project was entirely his doing, and without his work it would never have been thought of much less tried.) Thirdly, professional development in general, and action research in particular became caught up in a union dispute with the administration over conditions of service and teacher appraisal. Fourthly, teachers felt that if their project were not successful, that this would be "used against us". In short, local politics got in the way of pedagogy.

Happily, one initiative which evolved out of the failed action research project was a success. This was a programme of peer observation, where teachers paired up, observed each other's classes, and then provided feedback. At the present time this initiative is growing in strength. It is under the total control of the teachers involved. There is no reporting back to the administration. the additional time involved for briefing and debriefing is worth it in terms of the rewards to both observer and observed (the observer gets new ideas for his her own teaching, while the observed gets useful feedback on performance).

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Despite the fact that these projects all took place in widely differing contexts and educational environments, they all shared a number of characteristics. All initiatives ran into trouble, and in all cases, classroom change was less tangible than had been desired. In all instances, in one way or another, five things happened that prevented change. These are set out and discussed below.

1. Teachers were not given recognition or time off, etc. for doing to research.
The time required to do even the most limited research project is immense. The teacher or teachers concerned need to conceptualize their research project, to discuss it, formulate an action plan, gather or create materials, seek advice, transcribe interactions, analyze data, and write the project up. Failure to provide adequate (or even any) time carried more that a resource implication. It also

carries the message that the administration itself does not value the efforts that teachers themselves are making to change, in a critical and informed way, what is happening in their classrooms.

Even in those projects where limited time out was provided by the administration ,the lack of recognition given to the addition efforts which teachers put into their projects led to a feeling of demoralisation.

2. The agenda was hi-jacked by the administration.

A second factor which worked against the success of the projects was the fact that the administration interfered in the projects in one way or another. Even in cases where I believe there was no intention to interfere, there was a suspicion on the part of teachers that the process was either controlled by the administration or likely to become so. This suspicion was fuelled by comments from inside and outside the administration which were often misinterpreted or taken out of context, but which nontheless had the effect of creating a climate of suspicion which helped to either destroy the project or seriously weaken it.

3. The agenda was subverted from within by teachers who wanted to bolster their own position within the political context in which they worked.

For reasons which are partly explicable, partly inexplicable, action research seems to be a lightening rod which attracts controversy and contention. In all three case studies which form that basis for this paper, there were individuals who wanted to use the existence of, or promise of, action research to advance their won political interests within the organisations they worked for. Regretably, some teachers wanting to do research were put down by peers as having either intellectual ideas above their station, or a wanting to curry favour with the administration. In one instance, the project director effectively subverted the project by being too directive and by alienating the teachers.

4. Teachers lacked the technical skills and knowledge to conceptualise and operationalise the research that they were interested in.

In all of the case studies reported here, the majority of teachers lacked the conceptual and technical skills needed for planning and implementing their chosen research. I believe that most university based academics (and here I include myself) seriously underestimate the skills needed to do this sort of work. Just as problematic was the perception of some teachers who, I believe, were eminently capable of doing action research, that it was "too difficult".

5. Doing research got in the way of teaching.
In all three cases described above, teachers reported that adding a data collection dimension to their work added considerably to the burden of teaching. The need, in most instances, to set up audio and video recording equipent and ensure that this was working, the problems associated with collecting data from students in pair and groupwork situations, and the worry that the data being collected would need feed into their projects caused a deterioration in their teaching.

6. Action research was partly associated with curricular innovations and there was an attempt to use action research so determine whether or not the innovation was leading to change in the classroom.

Each of the projects described in this paper was associated with an attempt at curriculum change. Motives varied from government decree and economic imperative to changing pedagogical fashions. In all cases, as soon as the participants sensed any form of intervention (read "interference") they backed off.

7. Teachers were fearful that involvement in action research would be used against them.

In at least one of the case studies described above, teachers were fearful that the action research projects would yield data that could be used against them. Several teachers reported that if they

did not get positive answers to their investigative questions, then they would be labelled as "failures". Several teachers also felt that if their action research required audio and video recordings of their classes, these recordings could conceivably fall into the hands of the administration and be used for accountability purposes. This, of course, is totally at odds with the spirit of action based inquiry.

WHAT WENT RIGHT?

I would not like to conclude this piece by suggesting that action research was a total failure in the three cases concerned. While success was tempered by the factors outlined above, each project did exhibit some successes in prompting classroom change. In section, I shall briefly outline a number of things that happened in the course of the projects that provide useful guidelines for future action. In this following points lay sees from success. While the three cases which form the data-base for my paper would probably not be considered particularly successful by those on the inside, they do provide useful pointers for anyone wishing to initiate an action research agenda in their own context and situation.

1. Start small

Those of us who have been involved in action research initiatives over many years now tend to underestimate the social and psychological pressures on those who take part in such projects, the practical complexities of collecting and making sense of data during the course of teaching, and the difficulties involved in conceptualizing research. In one instance, the teachers backed off from action research, but became enthusiastically involved in a programme of peer teaching, which shares several key characteristics with action research. Hopefully, in time, involvement in the peer teaching programme will lead beyond observation and analysis to intervention and experimentation.

The most successful of the projects that went ahead were those where the teacher either started small, or managed to reduce the scope of their original idea to manageable proportions.

2. Negotiate with the administration and arrange trade offs, including time off.

While most administrations were notably reluctant to provide support in terms of paid time off, in cases where some modest recognition was made, this paid off in terms of teacher enthusiasm and involvement. It was as if participants simply wanted an acknowledgement that what they were doing was perceived to have value.

3. Get someone in from the outside to legitimate the exercise.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that the involvement of an external consultant, adviser or 'critical friend' assisted those involved in the process. The assistance might be technical help in selecting appropriate methods for data collection and analysis, or assistance in conceptualising the project. However, the real value seems to a psychological one - someone beyond the institution itself feels the project has value and is prepared to invest their own time and expertise. In addition, involvement of a credible external agent helps to legitimate the project to colleagues and administration.

4. Have someone on the inside to "own" the process.

There are no instances of action research that I am aware of that got beyond the initial discussion stage without an active leadership role being played by someone inside the orgsanisation who was prepared to take ownership of the project. The nature of the ownership might vary, from negotiating with the administration to convening discussion groups to contacting external consultants. Regardless of their role, and irrespective of their status within the organisation, these individuals were crucial to the success (limited or otherwise) of individual projects.

In this presentation, I have chosen to look at three action research projects which were problematic, but within which were certain indicators of success. The four characteristics set out

in this section were critical to the limited success of the projects I have described. They reflect and reinforce a number of points which I set out some years ago in an introductory book on action research which are reproduced in Appendix 1.

5. Consider less threatening or less time-consuming alternatives

I have already discussed the use of peer observation as a potentially valuable alternative to action research, which may nonetheless lead in the direct of action research.

6. Tell stories

Another idea which, like peer observation, is gaining currency is the employment of narrative accounts whereby teachers tell their own stories in their own ways. (I hasten to add that the notion of research as 'storytelling' has been around from a long time. See, for example, Denny, 1978; Goodson and Walker 1982; Walker, 1982).

The notion of narratives as a justifiable form of documentation has been powerfully argued by Freeman (1994). He argues that teacher-research as storytelling has three tangible benefits. It allows for the articulation of personal theories, it highlights the social nature of teaching, and it results in the emergence of naturally occurring texts.

Freeman tackles head on the fact that "story telling" can, in fact, be a euphemism for downright lying. He seeks support for his views from the Nobel laureate Toni Morrison who, in her Nobel lecture states that, "Narrative has never been merely entertainment for me. It is, I believe, one of the principal ways in which we absorb knowledge." (Morrison, 1994: 7). Another telling piece of support comes from Freema Elbaz, who states that:
Initially, a 'story' seems to be a person matter: There is concern for the individual narrative of a teacher and what the teacher herself, and what a colleague or researcher, as privileged eavesdroppers, might learn from it. In the course of engaging with stories, however, we are beginning to discover that the process is a social one: The story may be told for personal reasons but it has an impact on its audience which reverberates out in many directions at once. (Elbaz 1992: 5)

ACTION RESEARCH AND CLASSROOM CHANGE
In many instances, despite the difficulties concerned, teachers did get to the point of formulating a research question, collecting baseline data, finding an innovation, and documenting the effects of implementing that innovation. In all of these instances, teachers reported the project had changed their classrooms, and, further, that it had changed them as teachers. When this was investigated more systematically, the following changes to professional practice were reported.

How has your teaching changed? Complete the following:
Since I have been doing action research, I find that when I teach I now ...

	More	About the same	Less
1. tend to be directive	1	14	10
2. try to use a greater variety of behaviours	16	6	0
3. praise students	15	10	0
4. criticise students	0	11	13
5. am aware of students' feelings	18	6	0
6. give directions	4	16	5
7. am conscious of my nonverbal communication	11	14	0
8. use the target language in class	19	6	0
9. am conscious of nonverbal cues of students	12	12	0
10. try to try to incorporate student ideas into my teaching	20	5	0
11. spend more class time talking myself	1	9	15
12. try to incorporate student ideas into my teaching	20	5	0
13. try to get my students working in groups	15	18	0

14. try to get divergent, open-ended student responses	14	10	0
15. distinguish between enthusiasm and lack of order	9	15	0
16. try to get students to participate	18	7	0

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I chose as my point of departure the deliberately provocative, but intentionally ambiguous statement "Why action research doesn't work". The paper is intented to show, not that action research is a lost cause, but that there are identifiable factors which can either vitiate the projects or render them ineffective. The data base of the paper is three action research initiatives that I have been involved in in several countries over a number of years. All three case studies illustrate the central point that it is impossible to divorce any one element, in this instance, action research and professional renewal, from the context within which it exists. I have also used the paper to illustrate other forms of professional renewal and inquiry such as peer observation and teacher narratives that are in harmony with, and can lead teachers into action research.

There is no doubt whatsoever, that action research can work, that it can be an effective instrument for bringing about professional renewal and curriculum change. However, at both conceptual and practical levels, it is more difficult to initiate and sustain than most current thinking would have us believe.

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APPENDIX

Ideas for maximizing the possibility of achieving success in planning and implementing action research projects (Statements are from Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; comments in brackets are from Nunan 1989)

1. Get a research group together and participate yourself. (Comment: not only can sympathetic and like-minded colleagues be a useful source of ideas, they can provide a great deal of support when things get tough.)

2. Be content to start work with a small group. Allow easy access for others. Invite others to come when the topics that interest them will be discussed. (Comment: rather than trying to 'sell' the idea of collaborative research to sceptical colleagues, it is far better to work with a small group who are in sympathy with the idea of collaborative teacher-research. Once the group begins to work effectively together, the idea will sell itself.)

3. Organisationally, get things started by arranging an initial launch, identifying a nucleus of enthusiasts negotiating meeting times and the like. (Comment: the same remarks apply here as to point 2.)

4. Start small: offer simple suggestions to get people started. For example, who talks in your classroom and who controls the development of knowledge in your classroom group? Work on articulating the thematic concern which will hold your group together and establishing agreement in the group that the thematic concern is a shared basis for collaborative action. (Comment: as we have already seen, one of the errors that is often made by people undertaking classroom research for the first time is to set themselves resesarch projects that are far too ambitious.)

5. Establish a time line: set a realistic trial period which allows people to collect data, reflect and report over two or three cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. (Comment: the research process inevitably takes longer than initially envisaged, particularly once unanticipated problems begin to appear. Time needs to be allowed for these to be worked through. By drawing attention to the desirability of working through several research cycles, to ongoing rather than episodic nature of teacher-research is emphasised.)

6. Arrange for supportive work in progress discussions in the group. (Comment: once again, the value of collaborative support is highlighted. Regular work-in-progress meetings can also serve to reassure participants that progress is, in fact, being made.)

7. Be tolerant and supportive: expect people to learn from experience and help to create conditions under which everyone can and will learn from the common effort. (Comment: collaborative research is stressful because the participants are placing themselves in a situation where their real or imagined professional shortcomings come under scrutiny by others. For this reason, it is imperative that a supportive environment be created from the beginning.)

8. Be persistent about monitoring. Collecting compelling evidence is essential to ensure that people are learning from what their experience actually is. Be suspicious of claims made without evidence. (Comment: an important initial phase in the workshop outline presented in Chapter Six was to get participants to articulate their beliefs about language and learning, and then to produce evidence for these beliefs.)

9. Plan for the long haul on the bigger issues of changing classroom practices and school structures. Remember that educational change is usually a slow social process requiring that people struggle to be different. Change is a process, not an event. (Comment: implicit in the concept of teacher-research is the notion of change. We are doing more than simply observing our classrooms to see what is going on there. We are also intervening with the hope of improving on current practice.)

10.Work to involve (in the research process) those who are involved (in the action), so they share responsibility for the whole action-research process. (Comment: this point, once again, underlines the desirability of adopting a collaborative approach to research.)

11.Remember that how you think about things, the language and understandings that shape your action, may need changing just as much as the specifics of what you do. (Comment: one of the great benefits of involving others collaboratively in our research concerns is that it helps us identify and, hopefully, overcome the limitations of our own ways of thinking, acting and reacting.)

12.Register progress not only with the participant group but also with the whole staff and other interested people. Create a reputation for success by showing what is being done. (Comment: while it can be counterproductive to try to involve those members of the school community who are unenthusiastic about teacher-research, it is important to keep the community informed of what one is doing and the progress one is making. It is also important to avoid being seen as an exclusive, elitist group.)

13.If necessary arrange legitimising rituals, involving consultants or other `outsiders' who can help to show that respected others are interested in what the group is achieving for education in the school. (Comment: this can be particularly useful if there is a feeling of scepticism among others in the school community who feel you are just playing at research.)

14.Make time to write throughout your project. Write at the beginning, during the project and at the various `endings'. (Comment: the value of diary writing has been underlined here several times, but particularly in Chapters Four and Six.)

15.Be explicit about what you have achieved by reporting progress. For example, you can write up an account of your research project for others. Invite them to understand your educational theorising, to try the practices you have tried, and become part of the widening community of action researchers interested in the educational issues you have addressed. (Comment: the comments made in relation to points 12 and 13 are relevant here as well.)

16.Throughout, keep in mind the distinction between education and schooling. Action research is a concrete and practical process which helps those involved to build a critique of schooling, form the perspective of education, and to improve education in schools. (Comment: it is also important to keep in mind the value of teacher-research as an aid to one's own professional development.) (Points extracted and adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart 1988: 25-8.)